



**INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK AFRICAN MAID
AND WHITE AMERICAN WOMAN IN “THE HELP” MOVIE**

A THESIS

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ABSTRAK

Film *The Help* adalah sebuah film yang diadaptasi dari novel dengan judul yang sama. Film ini disutradarai oleh Tate Taylor dimana berlatar pada tahun 1960an. Dalam film ini digambarkan kehidupan Afrika Amerika di daerah Jackson Mississippi dimana diskriminasi dan kebencian rasial dialami oleh kaum tersebut. Fokus dari analisis mengenai film tersebut adalah hubungan interpersonal yang terjadi pada *White American Woman* dan *Black African Maid* ditandai dengan keakraban-keakraban dan kedekatan mereka.

Dalam proses menganalisis film ini penulis menggunakan metode studi pustaka dan menerapkan pendekatan psikologi sastra terutama aplikasi teori psikologi sosial. Di dalam sebuah masyarakat, manusia cenderung menyukai kesamaan ras, sikap, nilai, minat, latar belakang. Hubungan interpersonal antara *White American Woman* dan *Black African Maid* terlihat pada Skeeter dan Aibileen dimana mereka bekerjasama memperjuangkan kebenaran melalui sebuah buku yang kemudian di beri judul *The Help*. Dalam proses menulis buku tersebut mereka mendapatkan hambatan-hambatan diantaranya ketakutan-ketakutan yang dialami oleh *Black African Maid* pada tindakan diskriminatif dan berbagai prasangka buruk oleh *White America* pada tahun tersebut.

Kata Kunci : *White American Woman, Black African Maid, The Help*

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Literature can reflect certain situation. According to Endraswara, literature actually constitutes image of the journey that give goodness and badness expressions of people life (2007:88). This is the background of literary work to analyze social life in a society.

Film applies a combination of both audio and visual to bring messages. Comparing to those written literary works, the audio visual means in film is stronger messages. Film can also function as an educating media; as medium to deliver information. Watching the films clearly help the people learn more since vividness of the film help people create stronger memories of the material.

Taking 1960's, as its setting of time, the period was a socially and politically turbulent time for African Americans. Since the racial segregation appeared between white and black. In the public facility, every group has opinion that they are most superior to other group and it is believe that the truth is in its groups, like Black African and White American. This case disappears in some character in *The Help* film, through the relationships between Aibileen and Mae Mobley, and between Constantine and Skeeter, lessons of love learned young can counteract lessons of hate, they build interpersonal relationship.

Interpersonal relationships usually involve some level of interdependence. People in a relationship tend to influence each other, share their thoughts and feelings in activities together. Because of this interdependence, most things that change or impact one member of the relationship will have some level of impact on the other member.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This thesis focuses on the movie entitled *The Help* produced in 2011. The film was directed by Tate Taylor which is from an adaptation of Kathryn Stockett's novel with the same title. The main problem in this research covers interpersonal relationship between Black African maid and American woman in *The Help* movie.

The writer also uses the record of American history that might have problems interrelation between Black African and White American in the 1960s issue of racial prejudice raised by the writer. The facts of history are expected supporting a conclusion that taken by the writer in answering those problems.

3. METHODS OF THE STUDY

In arranging this thesis, the writer uses library research as method of research. This is started by watching the movie and reading some materials connected with the problems analyzed. The writer connects some information from one book to the information from other books on the topic of interpersonal relationship by collecting and selecting the appropriate data from many sources in order to make a strong understanding and analyzing about the problem.

To analyze this movie, the writer uses psychological approach and exponential approach. This thesis uses exponential approach to analyze the intrinsic aspect of the movie. “We designate this method as the exponential approach because the inclusiveness of the term suggests at once the several meanings of motif, image, symbol, and archetype” (Gverin, 1992: 197)

To review the extrinsic aspect, the writer uses psychological approach to literature, especially social psychology. In analyzing the problem, the writer will use descriptive analysis psychology theory especially social psychology by David O Sears, social psychology begins with analysis about perception and behavior, how people perceives other, how they interpret people behavior, how they built and change their behavior, how people interact each other, how people build the interpersonal relationship to different ethnic/ racial. These aspects will help to analyze the character development of African and American relationship in *The Help* movie.

SYNOPSIS OF *THE HELP* MOVIE

This film is about the story of an American woman named Skeeter (Emma Stone) come back from study and work in Jackson journal. She was given the task to answer letters from Mrs. Myrna, one of African woman writers who had died, and the results will be published. Skeeter has two best friends; Elizabeth Leefolt (Ahna O'Reilly) and Hilly Holbrook (Bryce Dallas Howard). They gathered in a Bridge club, a club of white American women. Hilly Holbrook is the chief of the club, whatever Hilly did, all members follow her. Hilly upholds racial understanding; she made a policy of "home help sanitation" the policy to create a separate bathroom between white American and their African maid to preview, she thought that Black carried disease to white.

Skeeter did not agree with that policy, the Hilly's policy became her inspiration to write about the life of Black women who worked in the white families. She hopes this letter can bring the alteration. The first thing done by Skeeter for writing is asking Elizabeth's permission to interview her Aibileen (Viola Davis), an African woman who worked at Elizabeth. At first Aibileen did not want to be interviewed because it is very dangerous for her family's safety. But after she heard the fired of Minny Jackson (Octavia Spencer) by Hilly because of using her bathroom and after Aibileen is going to the church and listening to the priest's speech about the courage to do the right thing, finally Aibileen agrees to help Skeeter finish her writing, but only them that know in which all the names and places disguised. Minny

is reluctant and cynical after she knows what Aibileen does, but upon she thought twice, eventually she would help Skeeter to finish her writing. Finally, Minny work on Celia Foote (Jessica Chastain), a woman who is married to Hilly's ex-husband and become the enemy of Hilly. In Celia Foote, Minny treated without any sense of racism. Foote is welcomed because she gets a maid and also friend.

Aibileen told that she had raised 17 white American children, the death of her son and her job to care White American children. At the time of the incident shoot of Medgar Evers, almost all black women who worked in white family came to the house of Aibileen to help Skeeter finishing her writing and they want their stories put into the book. This case makes Minny and Aibileen very frightened because it is very risk. Finally Minny told her the last story about her pie that made with her feces and given to Hilly one day after she was fired from her work. This was done as Minny's anger. It is as a punishment for Hilly. Hilly could not resist the homemade pie of black women that exist in her cooking. After spending 2 pieces, Minny told if the pie is made by her feces. Minny asks Skeeter that that story is put into Skeeter's writing because only that is the safe key so as not to get caught at the time of publication because of Hilly surely convinced all people that the article was not about Jackson.

Hilly had a plan for Skeeter, matching Skeeter with Stuart, her husband's friend. After some time they dated, Skeeter fell in love with Stuart. But everything changed after Skeeter's writing was recorded and published. Stuart known what had

been done on Hilly and thought it was a mistake of Skeeter. Finally, the relationship of Stuart and Skeeter broke up.

The Skeeter's writing entitled "The Help" is in demand because it is favored by many white people or black. Skeeter has accepted employment in *New York harper and Row*. Skeeter was not sure if she left Minny and Aibileen with all the togetherness that had gone through and chaos wrought by Skeeter. Minny and Aibileen convinced her to take a job offer and they promised that they would be fine. At the end of the story, Hilly came to the Elizabeth house and asked her to fire Aibileen. Aibileen did not regret it. He felt free after the truth was doing with his best friend, Minny and Skeeter.

DISCUSSION

1. INTRINSIC ASPECT

1. CHARACTER

As the writer told in chapter 3, there are two kinds of characters; they are major or main character, and minor character. Main character frequently appears the most than other characters. Main character in this movie holds important role, they are: Aibeleen Clark, Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan, Minny Jackson And Hilly Holbrook. **Beside the** main character explained above, there are also minor characters. Minor character can help, solve the problem and also can be the rival of major character. The minor characters in this movie are: Celia Foot, Elizabeth Leefot and Stuart Whitworth.

2. SETTING

The setting of place is taken at Jackson Mississippi when the atmosphere of Civil War appears. the setting of time also can we seen from news in scene 01:26:11-01:26:30:

from here, the members of the family...visitor from foreign countries and others will walk to St.Mattew's Cathedral. Senator Edward kennedy getting

out of the car. Mrs. Kennedy. Robert Kennedy, and Attorney General. (The Help, 01:26:11-01:26:30)

From the news above, it is known that Edward Kennedy became senator in the 60s who supported racial integration and Civil Rights during that time.

Prejudice and stereotype to Black people common happen in this movie. It happened to Black maid. It can be seen from the conversation below.

Elizabeth : *Hilly, I wish you'd just go use the bathroom.*

Hilly : *I'm fine*

Hilly's mother : *Oh, she just upset because the Nigra uses the guest bath and so do we.*

Elizabeth : *Just go use mine and Raleigh's.*

Hilly : *If Aibileen uses the guest bath, I'm sure she uses yours too. Wouldn't you rather them take their business outside? Tell Raleigh every penny he spends on a colored's bathroom. He'll get back spades when y'all sell. It's just plain dangerous. They carry different diseases than we do. That's why I've drafted the home health sanitation initiative.*

Skeeter : *The what?*

Hilly : *A disease-preventative bill. That requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. It's been endorsed by the white citizens' council.*

Skeeter : *Maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly.*

Hilly : *You ought not to joke about the colored situation. I'll do whatever it takes to protect our children.*

(The Help, 00:11:31-00:12:04)

The conversation above shows that there is racism in the country. Hilly did not want use Elizabeth's bathroom because her bathroom is use together with

Aibeleen, Elizabeth's black maid. Hilly commands to her Bridge club to follow her initiative, build separate bathroom.

3. CONFLICT

There are two kinds of conflict, which are internal conflict and external conflict. Firstly the writer will explain the internal conflict, then the external conflict.

In this movie, internal conflict happens in scene 00:40:34-00:40:50 when Aibeleen go to the church listening the priest's speech about bible to exodus chapter four, verse ten.

God, having asked mosses to free the Israelites.. Mosses answered: "oh my Lord. I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. "See, courage isn't just about being brave. Courage is daring to do what is right in spite of weakness of our flesh. And god tells us, commands us, compels us, to love. As exemplified by our lord Jesus Christ, is to be prepared to put yourself in harm's way for your fellow man. And by your fellow man I mean your brother, your sister, your neighbor, your friend and your enemy. If you can love your enemy, you already have the victory. Let's stand all right.

When Aibeleen was hearing the speech of priest, internal conflict happens inside Aibeleen's heart. Initially, Aibeleen does not want interviews by skeeter because she afraid with the situation in Jackson but when she hear bible to exodus chapter four verse ten she thinks more. She is a Christian, as a Christian, she must love all people especially her enemy. If she can love her enemy, she gets her victory. Finally, she prepares to be interviewed by Skeeter, she thinks that if she can help

Skeeter finishing her project, there is a change for Jackson. So, Aibileen can bring over white American that all Christian are the same.

Secondly, the writer will explain the external conflicts of the movie. There are many external conflicts happened, the writer will explain three major external conflicts. The first major external conflict happens when Hilly commends members of bridge club to build bathroom for their black maid. The second major external conflict happened when Stuart comes to Skeeter house. He is angry and ends his relationship with Skeeter because Skeeter's deed. and the last major external conflict happened when Minny was embittered about fired by Hilly, avenges her with pie that she said terrible awful. It is a disgrace thing for Hilly. She eats fesses of her ex-black maid that input in the pie.

1. EXTRINSIC ASPECTS

1. People Relation And Social Environment

Individualist to social environment can apply rejection, acceptance, and neutral to environment. Individual rejects the environment if the individual feels comfortable with the environment. Hilly tells to their friends about different diseases of their Black maid and command them to build separate bathroom outside the house. And also tell about her initiative for a disease preventative bill that has been endorsed by the citizens' council. Then Skeeter says that may be they should just build a bathroom outside for Hilly. From the dialogue it can conclude that Hilly has certain

stereotype toward Black maid in which she thinks that their maids bring the different diseases. She rejects colored people because they are not inapplicable with the environment. They are Blacks, a minority group and Hilly considers that white is the most powerful group.

2. Social Perception

Social perception is a process that is used to try understanding each other/ people because they have important rule in their life, to spend many time and try to understand their behavior. Social perception is focused on four aspects that will be analyzed by the writer to this movie. Social perception distinguishes into four there are nonverbal communication, attribution, impression formation, impression management.

1. Attribution

Attribution is a complex process people try to understand the reasons behind their behavior, why people have certain behavior in a situation. Attribution can be seen in flash back when Skeeter is still teenager. Constantine tries to understand about Skeeter behavior, this case builds interpersonal relationship between Skeeter and Constantine although they are having different race, Skeeter is White and Constantine is her Black maid.

2. Impression Formation

it can be seen that Minny is a sassy maid, when she goes to meet Celia Foot. She talks to her self “*no sass-mouthing, Minny Jackson. No sass- mouthing*” she wants to make impression formation, built first impression to Celia Foot. Celia Foot welcomes to Minny, she is very happy when there is a maid who wants work with her. She hugs Minny, but Minny rejects it, she still keeps her honor to white. At the moment of this hugging, there is no perspective of racism, they just make personal relationship.

3. Impression Management

Impression management appears in this movie. People try to make sure others that they are a good person in the first impression. Although Aibileen refused her, but Skeeter tries to make impression management, she makes sure to build good impression to Aibileen. She wants to take Aibileen home by her car. This is what called as an impression management; trying make good impression to other people.

4. Interpersonal Attraction

Every person will be liked and disliked by some people. Similarity and differences are very influential in interpersonal attraction. Liked or disliked depends to positive and negative impression about another person, it can take many forms, including liking, love, friendship, lust, and admiration. In *The Help* movie appears interpersonal relationship between White American (Skeeter) and Black maid (Aibileen). Skeeter and Aibileen have the similar thought, Aibileen feels people in

the world is the same, and there is not difference. Whereas Skeeter, she is anti-racism, she considers colored people are same with her; she honors them, because she also growth up by colored people, she did what she thought true.

CONCLUSION

The Help (2012) tells the story of early 1960s when issues of racism is raised in Jackson, Mississippi. In this film, blacks work on the white family. This film is adapted from a novel in the same name. *The Help* tells the story of black domestics named Aibileen who help the project of white American, Skeeter, to finish her book about the help who work to white family household. They cooperate to finish the project helped by Minny Jackson and other blacks. In fact, black people are not equal in America. Stereotype, discrimination, and prejudice also might happen in this movie especially to black. Black is identical with crude, criminal, and temperamental, etc. but in this movie, Skeeter sees black are the same with her. The concept of interpersonal relationship is not separated from stereotype, discrimination, and prejudice. In this case, interpersonal relationship among white and black has been showed in this film although many stereotypes, discriminations and prejudices have been showed as well.

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